



Speech by

Hon. Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Thursday, 22 February 2007

MOTION

Revocation of State Forest Area

Hon. LH NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism) (6.01 pm): I move—

1. That this House requests the Governor in Council to revoke by regulation the setting apart and declaration as state forest under the Forestry Act 1959 of those areas as set out in the proposal tabled by me in the House on 7 February 2007;

Description of the area to be revoked

Beerwah State Forest (SF561)	Area described as Lot 300 on SP195863 and containing 35.039 hectares as illustrated on the attached sketch marked "B"
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2. That Mr Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliament forward a copy of this resolution to the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism for submission to the Governor in Council.

I only support the revocation of land from the forest estate for alternative uses if it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposed usage is in the broader public interest and that there is no practical alternative to the proposal. Careful consideration has been given to this proposal and detailed consultation has occurred with affected state and local government agencies and stakeholders. Native title issues have also been considered in relation to this proposal and it has been determined that the action should proceed in the broader public interest as there is no practical alternative.

I will now outline the background for the proposal. This proposed revocation will enable the start of expansion plans to the existing Australia Zoo site to create Steve and Terri Irwin's dream of a standalone world-class tourist destination right here on Queensland's beautiful Sunshine Coast hinterland. Australia Zoo plans to continue to invest to expand its facilities over the coming years. This will prove to be a major contribution to the economy of Queensland. With parliament's seal of approval, Australia Zoo can now concentrate on moving forward and building what it hopes will be the biggest and best tourism attraction in Australia.

The late Steve Irwin and his partner Terri Irwin's commitment to wildlife conservation led to their vision that Australia Zoo become the biggest and best wildlife conservation facility in the world. Australia Zoo has international acclaim and directly employs over 550 staff. This number is expected to grow to 1,000 over the next five years and to 2,000 by 2015.

This proposal involves the excision of about 35 hectares from Beerwah State Forest. This land is located to the south-east of Australia Zoo and is essential for the first stage of the zoo's expansion. The extraordinary growth of Australia Zoo in itself has taken up much of the suitable privately held land available in the immediate locality. The area to be revoked largely comprises exotic pine plantation with no significant conservation values.

The CAMCOS rail corridor will isolate the subject land, currently in forest production adjoining Australia Zoo, from the larger forestry area to the south. To meet the needs of Forestry Plantations Queensland the zoo has purchased land of equivalent forest production value adjacent to the Peachester State Forest. As part of the overall package the zoo will also pay the state the difference in land value for the land swap. The land at Peachester will be used for plantation purposes to offset the land required by the zoo from Beerwah State Forest.

Forestry Plantations Queensland has been actively involved in negotiations with the zoo and is very supportive of the proposal and arrangements. Existing forest resources from the Beerwah State Forest will be harvested before works occur. A native title assessment has been undertaken for the 35-hectare area proposed to be revoked from the state forest and it has been determined that native title has been extinguished.

In summary, this action is the most appropriate way to provide for the expansion of Australia Zoo. There are a number of processes which Australia Zoo must implement to realise Steve and Terri's dream, but the revocation of the forestry land will bring expansion one step closer. I hereby recommend that parliament, by notice of motion, approve the revocation by regulation of that part of the Beerwah State Forest specified in this proposal.